Claims:

1. A method of incrementally refining queries and updating query results without requiring a user to provide an explicit indicator of query submission, comprising:

a) defining one or more query related character patterns that do not include an explicit indicator of query submission;

b) monitoring entry of query defining characters by a user to detect entry of a defined query related character pattern;

c) providing the user with one or more suggested query refinement options each time a defined query related character pattern is detected; and

d) providing the user with an updated query result each time a defined query related character pattern is detected.

2. The method of claim 1 further comprising tracking queries entered by one or more users and adjusting the suggested query refinement options based on a history of queries previously entered by the one or more users.

3. The method of claim 1 further comprising tracking results selected by one or more users and adjusting the suggested query refinement options based on a history of results previously selected by the one or more users.

4. The method of claim 1 further comprising tracking results selected by one or more users and adjusting an order of the updated query result list based on a history of results previously selected by the one or more users.

5. The method of claim 1 further comprising providing a visual indicator to the user when an updated query result list is provided to the user.

6. The method of claim 1 wherein one defined query related character pattern is a string of characters followed by a space.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein one query related character pattern is a string of characters followed by a predefined time delay before additional characters are entered.

8. The method of claim 1 wherein said one or more query related character patterns are based on characteristics of a client-server connection.

9. The method of claim 8 wherein one characteristic of the client-server connection is connection speed and wherein the query related character patterns are defined to occur more frequently as said connection speed increases.

10. The method of claim 1 further comprising providing a user input that allows the user to adjust the query related character patterns.

11. The method of claim 1 wherein the updated query result list includes result listings from a user hard drive, an intranet server, and an internet server.

12. Computer readable media comprising computer-executable instructions for performing the method of claim 1.

13. A method of incrementally refining queries and updating query results without requiring a user to provide an explicit indicator of query submission, comprising:
        a) providing a user with one or more query refinement options as the user enters query defining characters;
        b) detecting entry of a query defining word by the user without requiring a user to provide an explicit indicator of query submission; and
        c) providing the user with an updated query results each time entry of a query defining word is detected.

14. The method of claim 13 further comprising tracking queries entered by one or more users and adjusting the suggested query refinement options based on a history of queries previously entered by the one or more users.

15. The method of claim 13 further comprising tracking results selected by one or more users and adjusting the suggested query refinement options based on a history of results previously selected by the one or more users.

16. The method of claim 13 further comprising tracking results selected by one or more users and adjusting an order of the updated query result list based on a history of results previously selected by the one or more users.

17. The method of claim 13 wherein one defined query related character pattern is a string of characters followed by a space.

18. The method of claim 13 wherein one query related character pattern is a string of characters followed by a predefined time delay before additional characters are entered.

19. The method of claim 13 wherein the updated query result list includes result listings from a user hard drive, an intranet server, and an internet server.

20. Computer readable media comprising computer-executable instructions for performing the method of claim 13.

21. A method of incrementally refining queries and updating query results without requiring a user to provide an explicit indicator of query submission, comprising:

a) providing a user with auto-complete alternatives as the user enters query defining characters;

b) detecting entry of a completed query defining word by the user;

c) providing the user with a query result list each time a query defining word is detected;

d) providing the user with query refinement options related to the query defining word;

e) determining whether the user selects a provided query refinement option;

f) providing the user with an updated query result list when it is determined that the user has selected a provided query refinement option.

22. The method of claim 21 further comprising providing a visual indicator to the user when an updated query result list is provided to the user.

23. The method of claim 21 wherein the updated query result list includes result listings from a user hard drive, an intranet server, and an internet server.

24. Computer readable media comprising computer-executable instructions for performing the method of claim 21.

25. In a computer system including a display, a user input facility, and an application for presenting a user interface on the display, a user interface that updates query results without requiring a user to provide an explicit indicator of query submission comprising:

a) a query entry text box for entering query defining characters;

b) a query refinement option list of user selectable query refinement options that is incrementally updated as a query is entered into the query entry text box; and

c) a query result list that is incrementally updated as a query is entered into the query entry text box.

26. The user interface of claim 25 further comprising a visual indicator that indicates when the query result list is updated.

27. The user interface of claim 25 further comprising a user selectable search icon for manually executing a query defined by characters in the query entry text box.

28. The user interface of claim 25 wherein the query refinement option list is semi-transparent .

29. The user interface of claim 25 wherein the query result list is animated for a predetermined period of time after the query result list is updated.

30. A system for incrementally refining queries and updating query results without requiring a user to provide an explicit indicator of query submission, comprising:
    a) a user input device enabling input of query defining text characters;
    b) a display;
    c) a data content that is searchable;
    d) a memory in which machine instructions are stored; and
    e) a processor that is coupled to the user input device, to the display, to the data content, and to the memory, the processor executing the machine instructions to carry out a plurality of functions, including:
        i) defining one or more query related character patterns that do not include an explicit indicator of query submission;
        ii) monitoring entry of query defining characters by a user to detect entry of a defined query related character pattern; and
        iii) searching the data content and providing the user with an updated query result when a defined query related character pattern is detected.

31. The system of claim 30 wherein the searchable database resides on one or more remote computers and data used to define the one or more query related character patterns resides on a user terminal.

32. The system of claim 30 wherein the data content includes data stored on a user hard drive, data stored on an intranet server, and data stored on an internet server.